



W&M ScholarWorks

Arts & Sciences Articles

Arts and Sciences

1990

G. O. Trevelyan: Morality and the 'Cambridge University Boat of 1860

Terry L. Meyers

College of William and Mary, tlmeyer@wm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/aspubs>



Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meyers, Terry L., G. O. Trevelyan: Morality and the 'Cambridge University Boat of 1860 (1990). *Victorians Institute Journal*, 18, 185-187.

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/aspubs/381>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Arts and Sciences at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Arts & Sciences Articles by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

*Victorians
Institute
Journal*

AN ANNUAL JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO VICTORIAN
CULTURE AND THOUGHT

Editor:
Donald Lawler

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Joseph A. Kestner, *University of Tulsa*
John Pfordresher, *Georgetown University*
McKay Sundwall, *East Carolina University*
Richard C. Taylor, *East Carolina University*

ADVISORY BOARD:

Nina Auerbach, *University of Pennsylvania*
William E. Buckler, *New York University*
Jerome Buckley, *Emeritus, Harvard University*
Karen Chase, *University of Virginia*
Dierdre David, *University of Maryland*
Erwin Hester, *East Carolina University*
U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Princeton University*
Cecil Y. Lang, *University of Virginia*
Jerome J. McGann, *University of Virginia*
Gerald Monsman, *University of Arizona*
William Morgan, *Illinois State University*
Ross C. Murfin, *University of Miami*
Fraser Neiman, *Emeritus, The College of William and Mary*
John R. Reed, *Wayne State University*
David G. Riede, *Ohio State University*
John D. Rosenberg, *Columbia University*
Patrick Scott, *University of South Carolina*
Joseph Sendry, *Catholic University of America*
Linda M. Shires, *Syracuse University*
Richard Tobias, *University of Pittsburgh*
Herbert F. Tucker, *University of Virginia*
Katherine Van Eerde, *Muhlenberg College*
William Veeder, *The University of Chicago*

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS:

Kenneth Alrutz, *Lynchburg College*
Monika Brown, *Pembroke State University*
Suzanne Edwards, *The Citadel*
Timothy Evans, *Richard Bland College*
Laurence Mazzeno, *Mesa State College*
Kathleen McCormack, *Florida International University*
L. Wayne Markert, *University of Baltimore*
Kerry Powell, *Miami University (Ohio)*
Mary Saunders, *Hampden-Sydney College*
John Stasny, *West Virginia University*

Editorial Assistants: Donald Rutledge, Bryan Askew,
Henry Cuninghame and S. Victoria Smith

Editorial Secretaries: Deborah Holton and Bettina Moore

Victorians Institute Journal

Volume 18

1990

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note

U. C. Knoepfelmacher, <i>The Subject of Biography: The Victorianism of Eminent Victorians</i>	1
Linda M. Shires, <i>The Subject of Poetry: Tennyson as Woolf's Victorian Other</i>	17
Ashton Nichols, <i>Dialogism in the Dramatic Monologue: Suppressed Voices in Browning</i>	29
C. M. Smart, Jr., <i>Art in Architecture: Stained Glass of the Morris Firm—1861 to the End of the Century—an Architectural Evaluation</i>	53
Beth Kalikoff, <i>Victorian Sexual Confessions</i>	99
Monika Brown, <i>Dutch Painters and British Novel-Readers: Adam Bede in the Context of Victorian Cultural Literacy</i>	113
William E. Buckler, <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray. An Essay in Aesthetic Exploration</i>	135

TEXTS

- Rikki Rooksby, *A Short Note on the Swinburne Manuscripts at Worcester, Oxford* 175
- Terry L. Myers, *G. O. Trevelyan: Morality and the "Cambridge University Boat of 1860"* 185

REVIEWS

- ART HISTORY AT THE CROSSROADS.*
Joseph A. Kestner 189
- "CLASSICS IN CONTEXT: THE VICTORIANS."*
Judith L. Fisher 207
- Clinton Machann and Forrest D. Burts, eds. *Matthew Arnold in His Time and Ours: Centenary Essays.*
Fraser Neiman 213



From *The Crystal Palace Exhibition Illustrated Catalogue*.
London 1851, New York: Dover, 1970.

Editor's Note

The editor announces with great pleasure the reception of the 1989 Marguerite Schumann Award, voted by the North Carolina Chapter of the Victorian Society of America, in part, for work with *VII*.

The current issue you are reading is the first to be designed and set on our office computer and laser printer, thanks chiefly to the dedicated and expert work of our graduate assistants, Donald Rutledge, Bryan Askew and Henry Cuningham. We hope readers will approve the new design features made possible by DTP technology.

It is with deep regret that we announce the resignation of McKay Sundwall as Reviews editor. *VII* will miss his counsel, his expert direction, and his generous donation of professional labor and talents. *VII* is especially grateful for the revitalized and redirected Reviews department he has left us. A search is under way for a qualified scholar who will continue to develop the tradition of the *VII* review essay outlined by Professor Sundwall in his editorial note in volume 17: "an essay characterized by breadth of concern and profundity of inquiry." Recommendations, nominations, and applications for Review editor are welcomed and should be directed to the *VII* editor.

Readers are reminded that *VII* solicits essays on Victorian drama and essays for our regular TEXTS department, edited by John Pfordresher of Georgetown University, who welcomes previously unpublished or hard-to-get primary materials, bibliographic or textual essays. Inquiries or submissions should be addressed to John Pfordresher, Department of English, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057.

No Editor's Prize Essay was voted for the current issue. The Editor's Prize for an essay by an unpublished scholar (reviews excepted) carries with it a cash award of \$150 and a featured publication in *VII*. Candidates should identify their essays as competing for the Editor's Prize.

Murray Smart's essay served me brilliantly as a Baedeker on my sojourn in England last summer. With Smart in hand,



Visitors arriving at Henley station for the Regatta, c. 1904



Balloon race at Ranelagh, July 1906

Terry L. Myers,
*G. O. Trevelyan: Morality and
the “Cambridge University
Boat of 1860”*



I have recently acquired a letter by the distinguished historian George Otto Trevelyan (1838–1928) that will amuse readers and underline some cherished suppositions about the Victorian Age. It will, moreover, apparently recover several lines suppressed in a modest comic poem of some contemporary interest and fame. I can not, unfortunately, discover to whom the letter was addressed, nor whether any subsequent printing, much less enlargement, of the poem came about. Indeed, I cannot even discover precisely where in the poem Trevelyan was suggesting his lines be placed.

The subject of the letter is Trevelyan's poem "The Cambridge University Boat of 1860," a piece of doggedly jovial doggeral "written, by request, before the event of the contest," a witty celebration of Trevelyan's friends from Trinity College rowing in the annual match between crews representing Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Dated at the end "March 24th, 1860," the poem begins with "King Jove" deciding some twenty years before the race "To show to the world what a man should be like":

'Go fetch some clay; no, not that common stuff,
But the very best meerschaum—and fetch me enough.
I'll make eight hearty fellows, all muscle and bone,
Their average weight shall be hard on twelve stone;
With shoulders so broad and with arms so well hung,
So lithe in the loins, and so sound in the lung;
And because I love Cambridge, my purpose is fixed, I
Will make them her crew in the year eighteen sixty.'

Though the last rhyme alone should have been enough to sink the poem, it goes for another 112 lines to celebrate the

crew, individually and collectively, not forgetting to acknowledge a certain Don at Trinity, Leslie Stephen, whose physical prowess and enthusiasm for rowing were legend: “To keep at their side on the gods you must call/For the wind of a Tutor of Trinity Hall.”¹ The poem concludes with lines where, I believe, Trevelyan was thinking his restoration might fit:

So at night, when the wine-cups all mantling are seen
 (Whatever the mantling of wine-cups may mean),
 With your temper at ease, and your muscles unstrung,
 And your limbs 'neath the table right carelessly flung,
 As you press to your lips the beloved nut-brown clay,
 So cruelly widowed for many a day:
 Oh, then as one man may the company rise,
 With joy in their heart, and with fire in their eyes,
 Pour out as much punch as would set her afloat,
 And drink long and deep to our conquering boat!²

Trevelyan's letter is written from Italy, on printed hotel stationery with a crest (a griffin) and the address: Grand Hôtel (Brufani)/Perugia:

Oct. 26, 1909

Dear Sir

*I am glad to give leave to select what you wish for your vlume. In the “Cambridge Boat for 1860” you can, if you choose, add a couplet, without mentioning that it is an addition. After, [“] (I think,) “Hermes his luck;
 But Bacchus and Venus had best keep away,
 At least for the month that precedes Putney day.”
 Mr. Macmillan objected to it in 1860: [h] but half a century has now elapsed and it cannot have a serious effect upon public morality now.*

*Yours very truly
 G O Trevelyan*

The objection by the publisher Alexander Macmillan (1818–1896) to Trevelyan's decorously indirect couplet (possi-

bly replaced by the even more decorous "so cruelly widowed for many a day") provides one more view into the moral climate of the 1860s. Small wonder that in 1864 Dante Gabriel Rossetti cited "some funky reminiscences of the allusions to Venus" in Swinburne's "St. Dorothy" as part of the reason Macmillan was not willing to entertain the possibility of publishing Swinburne's poetry.³

The Trinity crew, by the way, won the match, March 31, 1860, rowing up the river, against the stream, from Putney to Mortlake, and against odds that slightly favored Oxford.

The College of William and Mary

NOTES

¹See Frederic William Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (1906, rpt. Detroit: Gale, 1968).

²*Macmillan's Magazine* 2 (May, 1860), 19–21.

³*Letters*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols (New Haven: Yale UP, 1959–62), 1, 108.

WORKS CITED

Macmillan's Magazine 2 (May 1860), 19–21.

Maitland, Frederick William. *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*. Rpt., 1906. Detroit: Gale, 1968.

Swinburne, Algernon C. *The Swinburne Letters*. Ed. Cecil Y. Lang. 6 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1959–62. 1, 108.

